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A
SERIOUS ADDRESS
TO THE
LOVERS
Of CIVIL and RELIGIOUS
LIBERTY.
A
LECTURE

Deliver'd at the
ORATORY,
IN

Villars-Street, York-Buildings.

By Mr. *L A C Y.*

A certain British King was wont to say, While
he could make Bishops and Judges, he
would have what Law and Religion he
pleased. *Rapin.*

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N.B. LECTURE delivered on *CIVIL*
and *RELIGIOUS* SUBJECTS Twice
every SUNDAY, viz. at ELEVEN o'clock in the
Morning, and THREE in the Afternoon, at the
ORATORY in *Villars-Street, York-Buildings*

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VISITATION:

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The RISE and GROWTH of ECCLESIASTICK
WEALTH, POWER and GREATNESS.

The SEATS FREE.



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GENTLEMEN,

NOTHING, to me, seems more odd
and capricious, than for Persons to
profess Themselves staunch Friends
to Civil, yet act as avowed Enemies
to Religious, Liberty: And that there are Per-
sons so absurd and inconsistent, is manifest from
every Day's Experience: It being common to
hear Men zealously oppose all Oppression in
State-Affairs, yet, with the same Breath, as
zealously contend for the Tyranny of Ecclesia-
sticks. As if a Man had a natural Right to use
his Reason, and defend his Property, in Political

Cases ; but must blindly give both, with his Conscience into the Bargain, whenever an arrogant, incroaching Priest thought fit to command it.

Yes, Gentlemen, we all know this has been notoriously the Case ever since this Nation had a Being, and, if the same ridiculous Tameness lasts so long, will continue to be the Case to the End of the World.

It was said by a facetious Author, that our venerable Guides had very good Teeth, and never quitted their Hold till They were compelled : But it is my Opinion, Compulsion is unnecessary ; and, if we can but once attain the Secret of Thinking for Ourselves, the whole Charm will be at an End. I thank God, their Dominion, in this Kingdom, is more over the Mind than the Body ; and the superstitious Fears of Women, and of Cowards worse than Women, are their principal Guards : — These Phantoms they have hitherto palmed upon the World for Realities, but are, in Fact, no more than the grotesque Figures used in Magick-Lanterns, all Deception. They persuade us, that our Eyes are of no use, till our Noses are saddled with their Divinity Spectacles, and these
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they tinge with what Colours, or paint with what Images, they please. Whence the Object that should be seen, is never seen at all, and endless Debates must necessarily arise, between those that use, and those that refuse them; because they argue from as different Premises, as Truth and Falshood, and must, of Course, conclude each other Knaves or Fools.

But, if mere Errors, or Impositions in speculative Points, were all they aimed at, the Damage, perhaps, would not be very considerable: But, alas! they are better Politicians than that comes to.—To Deceive is but the Means, to Controul is the End, and not only to ingross Power, but command Property.—A Fact as indisputable as Day-Light at Noon, and excellently well pointed out by the celebrated Mr. Dryden; *Your Heaven you promise, but it is our Earth you covet.*

Now, Gentlemen, it is not one System, one History, one Point of Time, that justify these Severities, but all Ages, all Annals, all Religions; and with this remarkable Aggravation, that spiritual Tyranny was every where more oppressive, bloody, and vindictive, than all others: As is manifest by comparing the Holy-
Inqui-

Inquisition with our temporal Courts, and the Fires of *Smithfield* with our ordinary Executions: According to the wise and upright *Mr. Trenchard*, *Such, therefore, as is the Government of a Country, such will be made its Religion; and no body, I hope, is now to learn what is, and ever will be, the Religion of most Statesmen; even a Religion of Power, to do as little Good, and as much Mischief as they please; nor have Churchmen, when they ruled States, had ever any other View; but, having double Authority, had generally double Insolence, and remarkably less Mercy and Regard to Conscience, or Property, than others, who had fewer Ties to be merciful and just: And, therefore, the sorriest Tyrants have been They who united in one Person the Royalty and Priesthood.* Our Author, I think, should here have added, by way of Distinction, when the Priesthood was uppermost—He goes on—*The Pope's Yoke is more grievous than that of any Christian Prince upon Earth; nor is there a Trace of Property or Felicity, or the Religion of Jesus-Christ, found in the Dominions of this Father of Christendom; all is Ignorance, Bigotry, Idolotry, Barbarity, Hunger, Chains, and every Species of Misery.*

A terrible Picture, Gentlemen, and as true as it is terrible! Neither is it confined to the papal Territories, but in exact Proportion as priestly Power is propagated over *Europe*, the same Slavery and Wretchedness bear it Company.—I say again, therefore, nothing can be more odd and capricious, than for Men, in this Land of Light and Liberty, to struggle for their Rights with the Crown, and yet sacrifice them at the Altar: Nay, not only sacrifice their own, but do their utmost to compel their Fellow-Subjects into equal Bondage. Thus what they do with one Hand, they undo with the other: For the Weight thrown into the Scale of Prelacy, would, at the same Time, be an Addition to that of the Prerogative. And He that is hand-cuffed with ecclesiastick Fetters, will make but a poor Figure in the Service of his Country: For, as the above-mentioned illustrious Author has it, *One Sort of Tyranny was artfully made to support Another, and Both, by a Union of Interest, maintained War against Religion, under a Colour of defending it, and fought the Author of it under his own Banners:* That is, as Doctor Tillotson finely says, *They Lyed for the Truth, and Killed for God's Sake.*

Here,

Here, tho' perhaps it may be objected, that we are no way obnoxious to these Tyrannies, and, consequently, have nothing to apprehend from either of them: It may be so, and God grant this happy Scene may always continue! However, as in the Days of our Fathers, it has been otherwise, and it is possible the like Calamities may visit our Children, it is our Duty to guard against the remotest Possibility of Danger.—Power is of a most incroaching Nature, and, like Water, allow it but the smallest Inlet, it will work its own way, 'till the Ruin is universal.—It is the Curse of the Populace to be amused and deceived by fair Words and specious Pretences: And thus the *Interest of the Publick*, and the *Worship of God*, have been the Snares to effect more Mischief than Fire and Sword in the Hands of the most merciless Conquerors. I may say, this has been our Curse in particular; for whatever Religion was professed, whatever Party has been uppermost, we have been sure to be the Tools and Dupes of all alike: Reformation was all the Cry, and, as there was always sufficient Room for it, if there were any to lead, there never wanted a Herd to follow; but, when they came to divide the Gains, like the Lion in the Fable, He that held the Sword, was sure to have the largest Share; and, in less
than

than half an Age, the same Work was to be done over again, or the same Oppressions to be submitted to for good and all. Our Histories are full of Proofs of this melancholy Truth, and ever will be so, if we give up our own Wills and Judgments implicitly to our Leaders, without examining Facts, Arguments or Consequences; as if Reason was intailed on a Coat of Arms, or Sanctity bestowed with a Mitre, and none had a Right to think for themselves without a Diploma from the University, a Patent from the Court, or a Seat in Parliament. Is it not high Time, then, Gentlemen, for us to throw off our Leading-Strings, and witness Ourselves to be rational Creatures, by a rational Use of our own Faculties, both in Thinking and Acting? Party is an odious Word, and has already done such infinite Mischief, that it ought to be out-lawed without Mercy. To suppose, in these corrupt and degenerate Days, that any one Man, or Set of Men, will pursue our Interests with more Sincerity than their own, and conduct them with more Prudence than we can Ourselves, is wilfully to seal up our own Eyes, in order to be lead by the Nose, whenever our Guides please.—We say we are free; let us prove it by our Actions! But He that dares not think for Himself, cannot act for Himself; and while our Faith is in the Custody of one

Set of Men, and our Politicks in that of another, we can neither serve God nor Society as we ought.—— We would not be understood here, to abolish all Order, and propagate Confusion under the Name of Liberty: No, we desire only that Doctrines may be examined before they are submitted to; and that Men may be convinced, before they pretend to believe: [I say pretend, because it is impossible, in Fact, to assent to any Position, till it appears to have the Sanction of Truth, or Probability at least] that all Traditional Authorities may be boldly set aside, that Craft of every Sort may be effectually exposed; and that both civil and religious Impositions may be for ever removed.

This is our pure and simple Meaning, Gentlemen, and however romantick Essays of this Nature may seem, or desperate of Success, they shall be followed with great Cheartfulness and Industry, till repeated Trials have convinced us, that Men are so indolent, that they had rather be deceived and betrayed from Generation to Generation, than be at the Trouble of preventing it.—It is said in our venerable Liturgy, *That God will be in midst of Two or Three that are gathered together in his Name*: Why, therefore, should he be absent from those who meet in the Name of God and their Country too?

That

That it is our Interest, Gentlemen, to make Truth the Motive and End of our Thoughts and Actions, is a Fact so universally acknowledged by all Parties, and all Religions alike, that there is not Room for the least Dispute: Any Supposition to the contrary, being such a Reflection on our Nature, and the very Being of Things, as would confound Reason, destroy Virtue, and render Knowledge itself wholly useless.—Truth, then, is unquestionably our Interest; and, if our Interest, it is as unquestionably our Duty to pursue it, as the only infallible Rule of our Lives and Actions. Of Course all Systems of Manners, Laws, Government, and even Religion itself, must be brought to this Test; and all of either ought to be rejected with Indignation, that will not abide that fiery but equitable Trial.

This Doctrine, Gentlemen, it is likely will give terrible Alarms: There are Persons in the World who pretend to have the Oracles of Truth in their Custody, and avouch, that She speaks in so strange and unintelligible a Language, that none but the Initiates can understand it: Yet, which is scarce credible, these very Persons will be the first to oppose all Access to her adorable Shrine: You may con-

sult them, if you please; but, if their Word is to be taken, the Goddess herself abhors strange Incense, nor will deign the least Intercourse with the Rest of Men; but thro' the Veil of Mysteries, with which they have artfully surrounded her.—This, therefore, being their Pretence, (a Pretence attended with infinite Gains to the reverend Brotherhood) what hideous Exclamations will immediately follow, when such Maxims are advanced, as strike at the very Foundation of their pious Frauds, and profess to unfold their boasted *Sanctum Sanctorum* to the most rigid Scrutiny of the profane Vulgar? — But let them exclaim, Gentlemen! It is no more than what the Heathen Pontiffs and Roman-Catholick Priests have done already, when Christianity put an End to the Frauds of the First, and the Reformation abolished the Tyranny of the Last.—These honest Men then cried out, the Church was in Danger, as heartily as any of their Fraternity can do now; and, if the World had been deterred by their interested Clamours, neither the One or the Other had ever taken Place: — In short, whatever big Words may be said on these Occasions, that which is alarmed at the Approach of Enquiry, carries with it a shrewd Symptom of Imposture; and, were there no other Reason, ought to be
sifted

sisted to the Bottom.—If we are forbid to know what we worship, as hath been elsewhere observed, all Religions are alike, and *Turks*, *Christians* and *Jews*, can claim no *Precedency* of each other.—But, for the Honour of *Christianity*, let us acknowledge its Doctrines will bear Examination; and, therefore, the extraordinary Concern of those who raise these Out-Cries, must refer to themselves only.—Truth shines out clearly in the Self-Denial, Purity, Simplicity and Charity of the Gospel; and, if ever it is obscured, it must be by the Pride, Avarice and Depravity of those that preach it. Yes, it is owing to them, if what was calculated to set free Mankind, should load them with an almost insupportable Yoke of Bondage; and what points out the clearest Way to Truth and Happiness, should become the most perplexed Labyrinth of Falshood and Misery.—*Detestable Wretches!* as the Antient exclaimed on another Occasion, *that could debase so excellent an Institution, to so vile an Use!*—However, Gentlemen, we will not content ourselves with generals; but, hereafter, demonstrate all we have advanced to be true, in a regular Series of Remarks on our Civil and Ecclesiastick History, from the first Settlement of Christianity in this Island, to the late happy Revolution: Wherein
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it will be demonstrated, that we have been regularly and uniformly misled and imposed upon, by our Party-Leaders of all Sorts, both political and ecclesiastick; that all the Benefits we have received by foreign Conquests, or domestick Oppositions, have been the Result of Accident, more then the Virtue of those we trusted; that even those very Benefits were of so slow a Growth, that they hardly advanced a Step an Age, and then rather to cajole with the Present Times, than serve the Future; and that all these, and many more, Misfortunes took Place for want of judging for Ourselves, and by implicitly trusting to the Knowledge and Integrity of Others.

An arduous Task! Gentlemen, and, if properly managed, of infinite Importance: But that is not to be done by the Abilities of any one Man, or without the Countenance and Encouragement of all the Honest, Brave and Free, that the Corruptions of the Times have left to do Honour to their native Country. This is what we hope for; this we solicit; this we call upon! Don't let us despise the Meanness of the Agents! or blush at a useful or seasonable Hint, let it come thro' what Channel it will; Even a Feather will help to turn the Balance;
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and if all share in the Ore, no matter who discovers the Mine.—Neither let us distrust our own Weight and Importance! The most overgrown Community that ever oppressed the Globe, was but a grand Association of such Individuals as we are; nor is there a Wretch so mean or despicable, who has not his Mite of Power and Knowledge to throw into the general Stock: — Separated, our Strength is Weakness; united, our very Weakness is formidable.—Let us remember what *Brutus* writes to *Cicero*, *The Common Wealth is lost, because it was given for lost.*

Thus, by a joint Pursuit after Truth and Knowledge, we shall be sure to acquire them; and, by a joint Confederacy in their Defence, we shall be sure to support and maintain them. We have not only a Right, the Right of Nature and Reason! to think for Ourselves, and speak as we think, but a Power to do both; a Power which is the very Basis of our excellent Constitution; what a *Briton* inherits from his Fathers, owes to his Children, and cannot alienate or resign.—It being only lodged in one Person's Hand, in Trust for another; and, tho' a Convenience to all, a Property to none: But, like the Sun, Air, Earth and Ocean, the equal
Claim

Claim and Possession of all Generations.—Thus the meanest Subject here in the Order of Nature, is a nobler Being than the most illustrious Slave, and has a much more inestimable Legacy to bequeath to his Posterity!

If, therefore, we have both a Right and a Power, to think and speak for Ourselves, it is but a decent Complement to Ourselves, to submit both to the Direction and Conduct of Knowledge and Virtue: Where Men are really free, it is supposed their Opinions have some Influence on Affairs of State; of Course, it is manifestly their Interest those Opinions should be just. That they often are so, I am very ready to acknowledge, but that they are sometimes fatally otherwise, no-body can deny. Indeed, this hardly ever happens but when their Sentiments and Passions are actuated by the Passions and Sentiments of others, and they are taught not to follow Truth, but shew Tricks at the Word of Command, for the Pleasure of their Leaders.—Nevertheless, this has given a Handle to our Enemies to decry our Judgment, to oppose our Wishes, to slight our Complaints, and even to reproach us for presuming to exert our Birth-Rights, where only they are of Value. Hence the People are the constant Butt of pert Courtiers

Courtiers and flattering Poets; and the *Million*, the *Herd*, the *Hydra*, &c. are the common Titles bestowed upon them.—Now, Gentlemen, the best way to obviate this Satire is not to deserve it; that is to say, to take our Opinions out of other Men's Keeping into our own; to listen to the Voice of Truth, Common-Sense, and Experience; to make solid Enquiries into the first Principles of Knowledge, and fix in our own Minds the Ideas of our own Interest: Above all Things, to divest our Selves of Party-Prejudice, that sworn Enemy to Reason and Conviction; to make our Conclusions from what we feel, not the artful Representations of others; and, in a Word, to judge of the Disposal of our Money, by our Gains in the Purchase. By this Method, we should soon separate what we really know, from what we take upon Trust; by ascertaining what we possessed, we should be taught what we wanted; and, once acquainted with our Wants, it would be no hard Matter to remove them.—If we think foolishly, it will be to no Purpose to think freely: In the Days of Ignorance Men could be enslaved, Body and Soul, by divine Right; both their Persons and their Properties were at the Mercy of their temporal and spiritual Tyrants; and it was a dangerous Crime in this World, and a damnable

Sin in the Other, to oppose their Oppressions, or so much as groan under the Yoak: But, Knowledge no sooner dawned, than these slavish Doctrines were confuted; these arbitrary Practices were destroyed, and Men begun to feel they were born for themselves, not to be the Slaves and Tools of those whose Duty it was to render them wise, free and happy.—Then it was Imposture was forced to use all her Ingenuity to cover and disguise herself from the piercing Eyes of jealous Enquiry: Much of her Paint, and many of her borrowed Ornaments, she prudently laid aside; and, instead of that open Impudence with which she used to insult her purblind Adorers, assumed such a Modesty and Reserve, as, for a while, amused her most inveterate Pursuers into something like Respect and Veneration: But, as Nature, however restrained, will, in the End, recur to its original Institute, so neither can the Progress of Truth be long resisted, or the Artifices of Hypocrisy concealed! Numbers of curious and inquisitive Spirits arose, who honestly endeavoured to dispel the Gloom of Ignorance entirely, expose the Wiles and Oppressions hid underneath it, and make Knowledge and Common-Sense as universal as Day-Light.—This, I say, was their Endeavour, but the Success has not as yet answered

answered their generous Purpose: The Enemy was still too deeply intrenched, had too fast a Hold on the Frailties of Mankind; instilled the Principles of Slavery and Superstition into the most early Years; taught them, that Truth was dangerous; nay, that it was Impiety to follow it: Heaped up a Magazine of ecclesiastick Bugbears to deter them from Enquiry; and of Abuse and Defamation, to make those odious to the Multitude, who presumed to disregard them.—To this may be added, that the busy Genius of Trade on one Hand, the Luxury of a Court-Life on the other, and the universal Degeneracy of all, choaked the Soil where the Seeds of Knowledge would otherwise have afforded an ample Harvest.—For these, and numberless more Reasons, tho' many Individuals have made great Advances to Truth, the Gross of Mankind have rather received their Discoveries upon Content, or remained almost in their original Darkness; Particularly the further we remove from the Metropolis (where stricter Enquiries, and freer Conversation, have made a broader Path for Knowledge) we shall find them not only absolutely enslaved, but fond of their Fetters, and angry with all who attempt to set them free.—Hence Imposture is still bold, and still triumphs over its most

active Enemies; still thunders out Anathemas on all who presume to oppose its Influence; still lords it over the Blind, and, by their Means, controls, in some Measure, even those that See and Lament her Tyranny.

Nevertheless, it is to be hoped, there are Thousands yet in *Israel* who have never bowed the Knee to *Baal*, thorough Enemies to Craft and Imposition of all Sorts, and as zealous Friends to Liberty and Truth: But, should we ask where they are? — Scattered over the British Dominions, single as they sprung up, or where Chance has let them fall: Strangers to each other, without the least Thought of an Union, without the least Correspondence of Sentiments, and, of Course, without the least Strength, to humble their Enemies, or support Themselves.—This, this has given their Adversaries such Advantages over them; living, and conversing so remote from the World, without any other Channel of communicating their Opinions but by Books, which some had not Leisure, others had not Capacity, and all were authoritatively forbid to read: It was easy to represent them as Monsters, avoiding, and avoided by their Fellow-Creatures: Heretick, Schismatick, Sceptick, &c. sounding as hideous
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and formidable in the Ears of the Ignorant, as Alligator, Crocodile, Mantiger, and other Beasts of Prey.—I may say, then, that if they have any Regard for their Ease and Reputation; if they derive any Advantage from their enlarged Principles of Morality and Religion; if they have any Desire to serve their Fellow-Creatures, by propagating that Advantage; they ought to come forward to meet each other; they ought to associate into regular Bodies, as well as other Dissenters; they ought to display their Doctrines freely to all, and appeal to the Publick to evidence their Innocence, Expediency, and Use.—It was really Matter of Astonishment that no stirring Spirit has recommended this before, and that no Steps have been taken to set such a Society on Foot.—With Regard to any of the Sects already subsisting, Persons that think for themselves, may as easily unite with the Religion and Politicks of the Times as either.—They have not the same Absurdities in the First, it is true, but they have adopted others as bad; and, in the Last, I speak it with great Concern, all are supple and slavish alike.—They that think freely, therefore, must think equally free in both; must be as zealous for the general Welfare of their Country, as the Relief and Ease of their own private Thoughts.

It

It is either way inconsistent, as hinted above, to clamour for Civil Liberty, yet struggle for Ecclesiastick Tyranny, or oppose Ecclesiastick Tyranny, and connive at the Destruction of Civil Liberty.—A new Sect, then, of such as would honour God, without Prejudice to their Neighbour, and serve the Crown, without inroaching on the Rights of their Fellow-Subjects, is the Establishment expected from honest, undesigning, impartial Men.—There is one already of long Standing, under the elegant and benevolent Name of *Friends*, that affords many excellent Rules for so necessary a Foundation; such as their Love of Liberty, their Enmity to Hireling-Levites, the strict Union preserved thro' their whole Body, the prudent Conduct of their yearly Meetings, and the joint Efforts they make to procure any Privilege, or defeat any Oppression.—In short, were it not for some outward Particularities, one little Fanaticism in their Doctrine, and their exact Compliance with the Letter of the Gospel, with Respect to the Resentment of Injuries (which is utterly inconsistent with the Spirit of Freedom and Independency) this very Society would, in Time, answer all the valuable Ends which can be proposed by any other.—How-

Bars

Bars (Human Nature being as tenacious on one Side, as it is frail on the other) we must content ourselves, with borrowing what is right and fit from them, without insisting or hoping they would make any Advance to us.

Alas! I talk not only as if such a Design was reasonable, but, as if it really was on the Point of taking Place! So natural it is to build on mere Possibilities, and reason from our Wishes, as if they were Facts.—And yet there is something so desirable in the Thought, and, at the same Time, so obviously useful, that nothing can be more natural than to conclude it might one Day or other be happily effected.—It is true, there seems at present, so light a Vein of Humour running among the Generality of the People, that, unless the Fashion is of her Side, Virtue herself might solicit to be heard in vain.—Now Fashion is so capricious a Dame, that you may as modestly hope to open Fortune's Eyes, as fix her in the Interest of Truth and Knowledge; and, if She is to be won at all, it must be by the Blandishments of the Great and Important, there being no Room for Impossibility and Despair in their Company.

But

But here the momentous Question that *Pilate* made to *Christ*, may naturally recur.—What is Truth? This great Centre where all the Paths of Knowledge ought to meet? — I honestly answer, Gentlemen, Truth is a Sea too vastly broad, too immensely deep, for the Wit of Man to fathom or measure.—But, if we cannot describe or comprehend the whole, we can at least venture upon Negatives; and very successfully affirm what it is not. Yes, we may safely say, it does not impose Things unintelligible to be believed, or command Things to be done, that are impracticable; it cannot bestow Infallibility on fallible Creatures, or turn an Idol into a God; it cannot demonstrate Religion consists in Ceremony, or that Men are to be Slaves in this World, to be happy in the next; it cannot give Virtue to a Robe, or Sanctity to a Church-Wall; it cannot create a Lord of Him, who is by Vow a Servant of Servants, or make a Lie an equitable Title to a Bishoprick; it cannot reconcile Faith and Perjury, or Persecution and Charity; it can never consecrate Oppression, submit to be the Slave of Power, or plead a divine Command to plunder and deceive Mankind: In short, it can never derive its Origin from Heaven, and yet do the Drudgery of Hell.

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You see, Gentlemen, if we cannot define Truth, we can detect Falshood; and to preserve ourselves from Evil, is, without Question, the first Step to Happiness — But, were we fortunate enough to see the Free among the Learned, and the Wise among the Honest, united for the Advancement of Knowledge and Liberty, what was a Task too mighty for a few, with Allowance for human Frailty, might be attempted with some Success by all; and certain Generals be laid down which might serve as Links to hold the Society together; yet leave the Conscience free to make what particular Conclusions from them it thought fit.—Pains and Penalties, Gentlemen, you might be sure would here find no Admittance: no Man's Liberty would be violated by exacting unwarrantable Subscriptions, without Authority either from Reason or Revelation; no uncharitable Censures pursue those that refused them; no impossible or contradictory Oaths would be imposed, as a Qualification to communicate Knowledge; or Subordination of Power make Tyrants and Slaves of those that God and Nature intended to be equal.—Yet more; tho' human Wisdom is limited to such narrow Bounds, I think it cannot be disputed, but it is sufficient to remove the Wants, to guard against the

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Misfortunes,

Misfortunes, and procure the Enjoyments of Life.—This is what a rational Creature might reasonably expect, and a merciful and just Creator would certainly grant: being a Grace bestowed on the vilest Animals--without which, we should do every Thing by Chance, like *Epicurus's* Atoms, and neither be answerable for any Evil, or meritorious for any Good.—But, granting human Wisdom is sufficient for the Conduct of human Life, it would be insolent to suppose any one Person, however dignified or distinguished to be possessed of a Stock sufficient for all: Nothing, therefore, can be more pertinent than to open this Door for general Contributions of Knowledge, that every one who loves his Fellow-Creatures, who is concerned for his Country, or would provide for the Ease and Comfort of his Posterity, may communicate his Share, either from Theory or Facts. To which might be added, all that was valuable in antient or modern Writings: And from the whole general Fund, such a System might be formed, as would put an End to needless Disputes, and useless Speculations, annihilate idle Opinions, and abolish tyrannous Custom, reduce Belief to Certainty, Knowledge to Practice, mark out the proper Bounds of human Understanding, teach us what we are, of what Elements,

ments, Passions, Appetites and Faculties composed; our Duties to ourselves, our Relations to the World, the Importance of Time, the Right Use of Pleasure; in a Word, explain our whole Business and Duty, as Children, Scholars, Husbands, Parents, Friends, Subjects, Patriots, and Christians.

And all this, Gentlemen, not for Amusement only, but real Use.— Knowledge must terminate in Virtue, or as *St. Paul* elegantly expresses it, it is but as *sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal*--Notwithstanding the pathetick Complaints of desponding Wretches, broken-hearted with Misfortunes, the four Dogmas of insensible Philosophers, or the counterfeit Self-Denial of designing Priests, there must be something truly desirable in Life, or we should not so universally covet to preserve it, even under the most desperate and miserable Circumstances — It is my humble Opinion, then, an unjust and prejudicial Doctrine, to undervalue it, tho' in Complement to that which is to come. That we are stationed here is apparent, and for certain Ends is as apparent; and, therefore, we ought to fulfil all the Conditions of our present Being as punctually, honourably, and gratefully, as if we had neither the Promise

or Chance of Immortality.—God and Nature seem to have placed us in an exact Medium between Pleasure and Pain, framed with such Materials, moved with such Organs, and surrounded with such Elements, as should render us in Turn obnoxious to each; but then indowed us with such Talents, as, properly employed, would rebate the One, and refine upon the Other.—This is the true Exercise of Knowledge, which constitutes Prudence, when applied to ourselves, and Virtue when employed for the good of Others. And, were we faithful and generous enough to exercise it as we ought, half the Evils we now lament, would vanish, and their very Names no more be heard of.—The Pangs we feel from Cold, Heat, Storms, Earthquakes, Floods, Fire, Disease, and old Age, are but Trifles compared with those we superinduce upon ourselves.—Intemperance, Poverty, Rapine, Fraud, Reproach, Shame, Persecution, Envy, Cruelty, and Revenge, are the Master-Furies that inspirit all the rest, and these are Demons of our own raising.—When the *Almighty* created Mankind, He meant the Earth should be as common to the Use of all, as Air and Water: But Avarice and Oppression inclosed what God himself left free: Hence Affluence produced Intemperance on one Hand,
and

and Want generated Craft and Violence on the Other. Infamy, was the Child of Both, and that wedded to Rigor, had Misery for their Offspring.—Thus we create the major Part of our own Torments, and may, if we please, annihilate them again; nor, however severe the Experiment may seem, should we be Losers by the Bargain.—Nature was plain and simple in its Desires, and easily satisfied, till it was debauched by Luxury; not that our Appetites were then less pointed, or the Gratification of them less sweet: But, having fewer Objects, they were easier regulated, and the Birth of Pleasure had no After-Pains of Remorse or Repentance, to damp Enjoyment, or make it bitter to the Memory.—What a Monster would that Man be, to whom a Train of Cooks, Butlers, Buffoons, Flatterers, Pimps, Bawds, Whores, and Creditors, were but so many necessary Members to be dragged about him where-ever he went, and not to be lopped off without destroying his whole Life's Repose? For my Part, Gentlemen, I should think the humble, frugal, and continent *Epicurus* (who set out in Search of Pleasure, as well as He) much nearer his Journey's End, tho' retired in his Garden with one or two Philosophick Friends, and lost to all the Pride, Folly, Noise,
and

and Madness of the giddy World: Easy in his own Mind, with more Virtues than Desires, and equally benevolent to Himself and all Mankind.

We know, Gentlemen, Philosophers are a People we have only read of, but never had the Happiness to converse with, and that it would be equally as visionary and chimerical to hope to revive their illustrious Enthusiasm after Truth and Virtue, as to rekindle the noble Ardor for Fame and Liberty, that inspired the Heroes of Antiquity — We know what Scorn and Ridicule, what Reproaches and Menaces, such an unpopular Attempt would meet with. — But, Gentlemen, true Knowledge, Temperance, Bravery, and Publick Spirit, do not depend on the Fashion; and, whether adored or despised, are the only solid Essentials that can render a Nation happy in its self, or formidable to others.

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